

WHAN the wode wexeth rody of
rosene floures, in the first somer
sesoun, thorough the brethe of
the winde Zephirus that wexeth warm, yif
the cloudy wind Auster blowe felliche, than
goth away the fairenesse of thornes.

OFT the see is cleer and calm with/
oute moevinge flodes; and ofte the
horrible wind Aquilon moeveth
boilinge tempestes and overwelveth the
see.

If the forme of this worlde is so
selde stable, and yif it turneth by so
many entrechaunginges, wolt thou
thanne trusten in the tomlinge fortunes
of men? Wolt thou trowen on flittinge
goodes? It is certein and establisshed by
lawe perdurable, that nothing that is en-
gendered nis stedefast ne stable.

Prose IV.

Tunc ego, vera, inquam, commemoras.

THANNE SEIDE I
thus: Onrice of alle
vertues, thou seist
fulsooth; ne I ne may
nat forsake the right
swift cours of my
prosperitee; that is
to seyn, that pros-
peritee ne be comen
to me wonder swift-
ly and sone. But this is a thing that greetly
smerteth me whan it remembreth me, for
in all adversitee of fortune, the most un-
sely kinde of contrarious fortune is to han
ben weleful.

BUT that thou, quod she, abyest thus
the torment of thy false opinioun,
that mayst thou nat rightfully blam-
en ne aretten to thinges: as who seith,
for thou hast yit many habundaunces of
thinges.

Text.

FOR al be it so that the ydel name of
aventurous welefulnesse moeveth
theenow, it is leveful that thou rekne
with me of how manye grete thinges thou
hast yit plentee. And therfor, yif that
thilke thing that thou haddest for most
precious in al thy richesse of fortune be
hept to thee yit, by the grace of God, un-
wemmed and undefouled, mayst thou
thanne pleyne rightfully upon the mes-
chef of fortune, sin thou hast yit thy beste
thinges? Certes, yit liveth in good point
thilke precious honour of mankind, Sym-
acus, thy wyves fader, which that is a man
maked alle of sapience and of vertu; the
whiche man thou woldest byen redely with
the prys of thyn owne lyf. He biwayleth
the wronges that men don to thee, and nat
for himself; for he liveth in sikernes of

any sentences put ayeins him. And yit liv-
eth thy wyf, that is atempre of wit, & pas-
singe other wimmen in clenness of chas-
tete; and for I wol closen shortly hir
wel, that she liveth looth of this lyf, and
kepeyth to thee only hir goost; and is al
maat and overcomen by wepinge and sorwe
for desyr of thee, in the whiche thing only
I moot graunten that thy welefulnesse is
amenused. What shal I seyn eek of thy two-
dren of hir age, ther shyneth the lyknesse
And sin the sovereyn cure of alle mortel
folk is to saven hir owen lyves, O how wele-
ful art thou, yif thou knowe thy goodes
ward, that no man douteth that they ne
ben more dereworth to thee than thyn
owen lyf. And forthy drye thy teares, for
yit nis nat everich fortune al hateful to
theeward, ne over greet tempest hath nat
yit fallen upon thee, whan that thyn ances-
cleven faste, that neither wolen suffren the
counfort of this tyme present ne the hope
of tyme cominge to passen ne to faylen.

AND I preye, quod I, that faste moten
they halden; for whyles that they
halden, howsoever that thinges ben,
I shal wel fleten forth & escapen; but thou
mayst wel seen how grete aparayles and
aray that me lakketh, that ben passed away
fro me.

HAVE somewhat avaunced and for-
thered thee, quod she, yif that thou
anoye nat or forthinke nat of al thy
fortune: as who seith, I have somewhat
comforted thee, so that thou tempest thee
nat thus with al thy fortune, sin thou hast
yit thy beste thinges. But I may nat suf-
fren thy delices, that pleyneest so wepinge
& anguissous, for that ther lakketh som-
what to thy welefulnesse. For what man is
so sad or of so parit welefulnesse, that he
ne stryveth & pleyneest on som halve ayein
the qualitee of his estat? for why ful an-
guissous thing is the condicioun of man-
nes goodes; for either it cometh nat alto-
gider to a wight, or elles it last nat perpe-
tuel. for sum man hath greter riches, but
he is ashamed of his ungentel linage; and
som is renowned of noblesse of kinrede,
but he is enclosed in so grete anguissous
nede of thinges, that him were lever that he
were unknowe. And som man haboundeth
both in riches and noblesse, but yit he
bewaileth his chaste lyf, for he ne hath no
wyf. And som man is wel & selily ymaried,
but he hath no children, and norisseth his
richesses to the eyres of strange folkes.
And som man is gladed with children, but
he wepeth ful sory for the trespas of his

gone or of his doughter. And for this ther
ne acordeth no wight lightly to the condi-
cioun of his fortune; for alwey to every man
ther is in somewhat that, unassayed, he ne
wot nat; or elles he dredeth that he hath
assayed. And adde this also, that every
weleful man hath a ful delicat felinge; so
that, but yif alle thinges bifalle at his owne
wil, for he is impacient, or is nat used to han
non adversitee, anon he is throwen adoun
for every litel thing. And ful litel thinges
ben tho that withdrawen the somme or the
perfeccioun of blisfulnesse fro hem that
ben most fortunat. How many men, trow-
est thou, wolden demen hemself to ben al-
most in hevne, yif they mighten atayne to
the lest party of the remnaunt of thy for-
tune? This same place that thou clepest
exil, is contree to hem that enhabiten heer,
and forthy nothing is wrecched but whan
thou weneest it: as who seith, thou thyself,
ne no wight elles, nis a wrecche, but whan
he weneest himself a wrecche by reputacioun
of his corage. And ayeinward, alle fortune
is blisful to a man by the agreablete or by
the egalitee of him that suffreth it.

WHAT man is that, that is so wele-
ful, that nolde changen his estat
whan he hath lost pacience? The
swetnesse of mannes welefulnesse
is sprayned with many biternesses; the
whiche welefulnesse, although it seme
swete and joyful to hem that useth it, yit
may it nat ben withholden that it ne goth
away whan it wole. Channe is it wel sene,
how wrecched is the blisfulnesse of mortal
thinges, that neither it dureth perpetuel
with hem that every fortune receiven agre-
ably or egaly, ne it delyteth nat in al to hem
that ben anguissous. O ye mortal folk, what
seke ye thanne blisfulnesse out of your-
self, whiche that is put in yourself? Error
and folye confoundeth yow.

SHAL shewe thee shortly the poynt
of sovereyne blisfulnesse. Is ther
anything more precious to thee than
thyself? Thou wolt answer, Nay. Channe,
yif it so be that thou art mighty over thy-
self, that is to seyn, by tranquillitee of thy
sowle, than hast thou thing in thy power
that thou noldest never lesen, ne fortune
ne may nat beneme it thee. And that thou
mayst knowe that blisfulnesse ne may nat
standen in thinges that ben fortunous and
temporel, now understonde and gader it
togidere thus: Yif blisfulnesse be the sov-
creyn good of nature that liveth by resoun,
ne thilke thing nis nat sovereyn good that
may be taken away in any wyse, (for more
worthy thing & more digne is thilke thing
that may nat ben taken away); than shew-
eth it wel, that the unstableness of for-
tune may nat atayne to receiven verray blis-

fulnesse. And yit moreover: what man that
this toumbling welefulnesse ledeth, either
he woot that it is chaungeable, or elles he
woot it nat. And yif he woot it nat, what
blisful fortune may ther be in the blind-
nesse of ignorance? And yif he woot that
it is chaungeable, he moot alwey ben adrad
that he ne lese that thing that he ne doubt-
eth nat but that he may lesen it; as who
seith, he mot ben alwey agast, lest he lese
that he wot wel he may lese it, for which, the
continuel dred that he hath, ne suffreth
him nat to ben weleful. Or yif he lese it, he
weneth to be dispysed and forleten. Certes
eek, that is a ful litel good that is born with
evene herte whan it is lost; that is to seyn,
that men do no more fors of the lost than of
the havinge. And for as moche as thou thy-
self art he, to whom it hath ben shewed and
proved by ful manye demonstraciouns, as
I wot wel, that the sowles of men ne mowe
nat deyen in no wyse; and eek sin it is cleer
and certein, that fortunous welefulnesse
endeth by the deeth of the body; it may
nat ben douted that, yif that deeth may
take away blisfulnesse, that alle the kinde
of mortal thinges ne descendeth into wrec-
chednesse by the ende of the deeth. And
sin we knowen wel, that many a man
hath sought the fruit of blisfulnesse nat
only with suffringe of deeth, but eek with
suffringe of peynes and tormentes; how
mighte than this present lyf maken men
blisful, sin that, whan thilke selve lyf is
ended, it ne maketh folk no wrecches?

Metre IV.

*Quisquis volet perennem Cautus ponere
sedem.*

WHAT maner man, stable &
war, that wole founden him
a perdurable sete, & ne wole
nat ben cast down with the
loude blastes of the wind
Eurus; & wole despyse the
see, manasinge with flodes; lat him es-
chewen to bilde on the cop of the moun-
taine or in the moiste sandes. for the felle
wind Auster tormenteth the cop of the
mountaigne with all his strengthes; and
the lause sandes refusen to beren the hevvy
wighte.

AND forthy, if thou wolt fleen the
perilous aventure, that is to seyn,
of the worlde; have minde certeinly
to flechen thyn hous of a merye site in a
lowe stoon. for although the wind, troub-
ling the see, thondre with overthrowing-
es, thou that art put in quiete, and weleful
by strengthe of thy palis, shalt leden a
cleer age, scorninge the woodnesses and
the ires of the eyr.